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The Thoreau Society, Inc., is an informal gathering of students and admirers of Henry David Thoreau. Thomas Blanding, president; Eric Parkman Smith, Treas.; and Walter Harding, sec. Address communications to the secretary at 19 Oak St., Geneseo, N.Y. 14454. Dues: $20; students, $10; family, $35; benefactor, $100; life member, $500. Dues should be sent to the Thoreau Society, 156 Belknap St., Concord, Mass. 01742 where the Society sponsors the Thoreau Lyceum.

AMANDA MATHER'S RECOLLECTIONS OF THOREAU
edited by Walter Harding.

Daniel Gregory Mason (1873-1953), the composer and Columbia University professor of music, had a lifelong enthusiasm for Thoreau. When in 1897 he published an essay on "The Idealistic Basis of Thoreau's Genius," still one of the outstanding essays on Thoreau, he was invited to write a twenty-thousand word biography for the Beacon Biographies series. Although he wrote the biography, he was not satisfied with it and destroyed it before turning it into the publisher. That was unfortunate, for he had apparently spent a good deal of time interviewing people still alive then who personally knew Thoreau and thus thoseinterviews are forever lost--or most of them Among those he questioned was his Aunt Amanda Mather, wife of the Rev. William Mather, the Trinitarian Congregational pastor in Concord from 1844 to 1849 and a close friend of the Thoreau family. In reply to Mason's questions, Amanda Mather wrote three letters, two to Mason and one to his mother. These letters were eventually given by Mason to Raymond Adams of Chapel Hill, N.C. They are printed here with the kind permission of Mrs. Raymond Adams.

A few notes may help explain the text. In 1826, the First Parish Church in Concord split into Unitarian and Trinitarian factions and the Trinitarians established a new church. The Thoreau family itself was split between the two churches. In 1844 Samuel Hoar, Concord's leading citizen, was sent by the governor of Massachusetts to Charleston, S.C., to attempt to negotiate some compromise with the governor of South Carolina over seisure of blacks on Massachusetts ships at Charleston. Hoar, accompanied by his daughter, was mobbed and run out of town by the Southerners. Frank Sanborn, in his 1882 biography of Thoreau, angered many Concordians when he accused Mrs. Thoreau of being a malicious gossip. Thoreau's sister Helen died of tuberculosis in 1849.

Mrs. Mather's letters follow:

Paris [N.Y.] Aug. 9, 1897
My Dear Nephew,

. . . Your mother asks if I knew Miss Sophia Thoreau? Yes, often saw her before & after her sister[']s death. She was a lady of culture & agreeable manner & often at our house. Had much taste for art--painting & drawing &c. In this connection your mother asks if I knew any thing of the Thoreau women. His Mother I knew well. She attended the Unitarian ch. with her husband, the sisters Helen & Sophia occasionally came to the Congregational ch. But I often saw them all & our sympathies in many things were the same. The Anti-slavery movement you are probably aware was coming with great intensity at that time, & the Unitarian ch. were the first to engage in it. The Cong. ch.did not at first--untill [sic] after Mr[.] Hoar & his daughter's treatment at Charleston & some other exasperating events commit themselves to that side. . . . Your mother's question, "Did you ever hear Henry's Mother called a 'village gossip' & malicious' at that?" No. Never. I do not believe she ever was. She was a sensible practical woman of Scotch descent. How could such a story as that be true, of a woman whose daughters brought up directly under her own influence were so lovely & good in every way as they were, to say nothing of her boys John & Henry? You ask when we were at Concord,I think about 45 & onward. . . . As to my impressions of Thoreau, he seems to me to have been like himself, & no one else, I have known or read of. As in the material world of nature we find sporadic specimens sometimes of which only one can be found so it seems it was with him. As to his "taking life slowly," it was as if a child were brought for the first time into a room, or museum, where there were many things seen for the first time & instead of running from one wonder to another, should stop at the first, be wholly absorbed in its properties, make a study of it. Most children would pass hastily from object to object, knowing after but little of any. This is what I mean by "taking life slowly." Of music he was very fond as his sisters were. . . . Your affec. Aunt Amanda [Mather].

Paris. Aug. 9, 1897
My Dear Helen,

. . . The [Thoreau] family lived near us, & there were several reasons why we were more closely drawn together than would have been expected of persons not sympathizing in other things. Your Uncle Mather was fond of scientific studies, always took "The Scientific American" & nature in the common sense of the word, as it lies around us, was a favorite study with him. This interested Henry. If he, in his tramps off into the woods, found a new grass or plant, he would bring it to Mr[.] Mather & Mr[.] Mather the same to him. The 'Unitarian defection' as it was called, had divided churches a little earlier, & the old ch. in

Concord with the narrow creed of orthodox lines at that day, had split (This separation was some five years before we went there.) into separation. The smaller part came off & formed the orthodox ch. of which Mr[.] Mather was Pastor, & the old ch. becoming more decided in its Unitarian creed remained. The Thoreau family remained with the old ch. But two Aunts, sisters of Mr[.] Thoreau[,] the Father[,] came to our ch. They were ladies of strong character & high social position, & had almost as much influence with Henry, & his two sisters, as their own parents. So it happened that these two sisters came to our ch. with their Aunts quite often. Henry was younger & his taste for nature, led him I think to look for truth & light in it, & in the circumstances, to drop between the two churches. Oftentimes on a Sab. morning, as we went to ch. we met him in his week-day dress going off to the river or woods, & may be on our returning again, with a bunch of plants or branches of trees in his hands. He took no pains to conceal his doings, nor was there any species of defiance or scorn for others. He simply did his way, & was willing they should do theirs. His sisters were gifted, were musical & had taste for art &c. Used their pencils & studied nature in sketching & painting. The principle or use of the "Camera Obscura" was described about that time, & Mr[.] Mather was much interested in it & sent away for the lenses & made the box himself, & we had great pleasures in it--it gave very perfect pictures & the Thoreaus used to come in for it, take the view by the camera, & then by placing an oiled paper on the glass, draw the outline. So our tastes drew us together. It is hard to classify Henry Thoreau, to put him any where. He was himself & belonged to no class or creed. I think he did not reject revelation of God in the scriptures, but for himself sought light from nature in His Works. There was nothing low, or with downward tendencies in his mental theories. This is my impression of him. You must take it only for this. When I knew him, it was so long ago & what I have read about him, I do not lay so much stress on, for I see that the writers had their own theories often rather than representing his. . . . from your loving Aunt Amanda.

Paris Sept. 13, 1897

My Dear Nephew,

. . . In my impressions of him [Thoreau] you will remember that my personal knowledge of him dates far back. He was but two years younger than I. And when I knew him at Concord he was just starting out in his peculiar life. . . . "Did your neighbors & friends at Concord consider Thoreau in any sense misanthropic, embittered &c" I think not. They thought him odd in following his bent, finding society in nature apart from his fellows, but if there was wrong in it, it was in his disregard of his fellows, taking his own enjoyment as his highest aim. He was kindly to others when it came in his way, but it was not an object to him. I do not think he thought living for others . . . was what his life was for. 2. Did he laugh etc. when you met him in the village or parlor? Was he genial & pleasant?

He was pleasant always & genial in the sense of being responsive to the interest you might expect in any subject we had before us. But for our own intercourse with him we always talked of the matters in which we knew his line of thought went [?] ours. Music was always a delight to him. Animal life as well as plant was a study. . . . The scientists were [then] searching for the causes of things & any hints which were given of more light & knowledge interested my husband & Thoreau mutually. Common talk, a general conversation entertainment would have been a great bore to him.

III. His personal appearance.

It was peculiar & not easy to describe. Plain in face & feature one might say, & yet there was an earnestness that took hold of you & affected you favorably. Something you would wish to see again. . . .

I very distinctly remember his true & devoted affection for his parents & sisters. A very touching incident to me was his part at the funeral of his eldest sister who died before I left Concord. She was a gifted person in music, painting &c, had I think more sympathy in his peculiar ways perhaps than any other. The funeral service was in the parlor of his Father's house. Both of the ministers the Unitarian & Mr[.] Mather were there for the service. Henry sat unmoved with his kindred till the service was through. He never went to church at that time or any other religious occasion. In the moments of interval while they were preparing outside to remove the bier, he arose & taking a music box from the table set it by winding it to a particular tune of the sweetest tenderest minor strains that seemed like no earthly tune. All sat quietly till it was through.

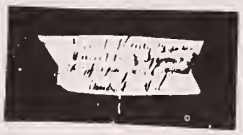
A THOREAU SILHOUETTE ?

The firm of Bauman Rare Books (1215 Locust Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19107) has acquired what appears to be a hitherto unknown silhouette of Thoreau. They describe it as follows: "The piece is in what appears to be the original frame, the silhouette measuring approximately 6 1/2 by 9 1/4 inches. Beside the silhouette, running vertically on the sheet, is written (very faintly, in ink) "Henry David Thoreau / Harvard . . . " There seems to be a year and a name written below that, but the ink is too faded to read. On the reverse of the silhouette there is a small piece of paper pasted onto the wood backing which reads "David Henry Thoreau / Harvard 1837, given / Dr. Joseph Green Cogswell / Cambridge, Mass."

Cogswell was at one time the librarian at Harvard, but at the time of Thoreau's attendance at the university he was no longer employed there.

They would be very interested in learning if anyone knows anything further of the sil-

houette or its provenance. Positive identification of the silhouette would be exciting indeed, so rare are the known portraits from life of Thoreau.



THE 1989 ANNUAL MEETING . . .

The 1989 annual meeting of the Thoreau Society was called to order at 10 a.m. on Saturday July 15 by the president, Thomas Blanding in the First Parish Church in Concord, Mass. The secretary's report was approved as printed in the Summer, 1988 BULLETIN. The following treasurer's report and proposed budget for the coming year was read by the treasurer, Eric Parkman Smith, and approved unanimously.

	Budget 1990	Actual 1989
Income		
Membership	19,000	18,592
Admissions	6,000	5,383
Net Profit - Shops	22,000	20,825
Investment Income	1,500	1,843
Donations	15,600	17,596
Annual Meeting	2,000	1,551
Other	600	625
Total	66,700	66,415
Expenses		
Wages and Fringes	36,500	33,816
Occupancy	3,500	2,069
Overhead	14,000	13,399
Publications	7,500	6,265
Travel	300	272
Annual Meeting	3,000	2,800
Debt Retirement	-	3,900
Deficit Reduction	1,200	-
Archives	500	-
Sub-total	66,500	62,521
Depreciation	1,950	2,119
Total	68,450	64,640
Income or (Deficit)	(1,750)	1,775
Income Before Depreciation	200	3,894

Ronald Hoag, chairman of the nominating committee, proposed the following slate of officers: Thomas Blanding, president; Walter Harding, secretary; Eric Parkman Smith, treasurer; Malcolm Ferguson, chairman of the program committee; Thomas Blanding, chairman of the executive committee; all for terms of one year. Joel Myerson and Marcia Moss, members of the board of directors for three years. With no nominations from the floor, the slate was elected unanimously. Thomas Blanding announced his appointment to the nominating committee for 1990 of Barbara Wojtusik, Mary Pitts, and Ronald Hoag, chairman. Edmund Schofield, on behalf of the board of directors, presented the following resolution: The members of the Thoreau Society request that the Towns of Concord and Lincoln, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the Government of the United States take every reasonable step to preserve and protect Walden Woods. They specifically request that all of Walden Woods be granted National Historic Landmark status. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Thomas Blanding read a letter which he had sent to students of the People's Republic of China honoring their use of Thoreau's techniques of civil disobedience in their nonviolent demonstrations for democratic reform. Anne McGrath reported briefly on current activities of the Thoreau Lyceum. Tribute was paid to the efforts of the retiring executive committee chairman Donald Worster in compiling his report, "The Thoreau Society: Planning for the Future," for the use of the Board of Directors.

It was announced that Ray Parmenter has now given to the Thoreau Society Archives a second large collection of the papers of Thoreau's friend Daniel Ricketson including many fragments of Ricketson's long-thought-to-be-lost private journal.

It was announced that a new bronze plaque will soon be erected at the site of Thoreau's birthplace on Virginia Road through the generosity of the owner.

Elizabeth Witherell, editor-in-chief of the Princeton Edition of the Writings of Thoreau announced that it has just been refinanced by the National Endowment for the Humanities and that the edition expects to publish Volume 3 of the journal in 1990 and volume 4 in 1992.

Walter Harding presented a brief report on the retracing of Thoreau's trip on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers by canoe on its 150th anniversary.

Bradley Dean read a paper on "The Reception of Thoreau as a Lecturer" and Thomas Blanding one on "Resurrecting Walden Woods." A luncheon was served in the church vestry and was followed by the annual Thoreau Quiz led by Edmund Schofield. Richard O'Connor led a guided tour of the sites of "Former Inhabitants" of Walden Woods. Walter Harding led a tour of Thoreau sites in downtown Concord. Marcia Moss presented a special display of the Thoreau treasures in the Concord Free Public Library. Daniel and Sue Larson most graciously opened the Thoreau-Alcott House on Main Street for a tour. After an autographing party, a buffet supper was served at the Thoreau Lyceum. In the evening a performance of Charles Wilbert's one-act play about Thoreau, REALOMETERS, was presented by the Academy of Acting, Voice and Diction of New York City. Norma Novak, Bob Reed Diamond, and Harlan Hamilton were in the cast.

On Friday evening, Thomas Blanding spoke on "The Thoreau-Alcott House" and on Sunday morning, Rev. Alan Seaburg conducted a special service at the First Parish.

We are especially indebted to Malcolm Ferguson for chairing the program committee, Martha Stevenson for providing flowers; Lillian Files, for publicity; Marian Wheeler and Lucille Needham for hostessing; Richard Stephenson for taping; and Sue and Daniel Larson for opening their home.

RECREATING THOREAU'S CONCORD-MERRIMACK RIVER JOURNEY by Walter Harding

On July 10, 1989, forty hardy Thoreau canoeists in a flotilla of twenty canoes embarked from Hooksett, N.H., on the Merrimack River, under the leadership of Bob Madison of Annapolis, Md., to retrace Thoreau's 1839 Concord and Merrimack Journey on its 150th anniversary, under the sponsorship of the Thoreau Society, the Western Pennsylvania Paddle Sport Association, the American Canoe Association, the New Hampshire Humanities Council, and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities. Spending four days, they covered a little less than thirty of the forty-eight miles down the Merrimack and up the Concord to Concord, Mass. The canoeists came from points as far away as Ely, Minn., and Paris, France, and ranged in age from blooming youth to specimens of antiquity like me. We survived the trip with only minor mishaps such as falling into the river, being scattered to the four winds by a minor typhoon, and being soaked by a day's downpour of rain.

Despite the ravages of civilization, the two rivers are not only surviving, but thriving. While they are not perfect by any means, we were all amazed, after earlier reports, at how free the shores of the upper river were from debris and how few signs there were of pollution. Conditions after we crossed the Massachusetts state line were not as pleasant. For most of the journey being on the river was like being on another world--a world much like that Thoreau experienced in 1839. Dense trees and shrubs sheltered the enbankments and hid most signs of civilization except for occasional bridges and power lines. From just casual observation we spotted and/or heard more than fifty species of birds and both muskrats and beavers were in evidence. The trip itself was a wonderful experience and I have not felt that close to Henry Thoreau in a number of years. We are all very proud to be able to say, "We Came. We saw. We Concord the Merrimack--Thoreauly."

A REPORT ON WALDEN

Thanks to the valiant efforts of the Thoreau Country Conservation Alliance in particular, the efforts to encroach upon Walden Woods and Walden Pond are at least temporarily being held in abeyance. Particular efforts are being exerted to have the whole Walden Woods area declared a National Historic Landmark by the federal government. Articles, editorials and letters on the subject have appeared in the CONCORD JOURNAL for April 6 and 13, May 18, June 29, and July 6; in the Buffalo NEWS for July 7; SIERRA MAGAZINE for May; and the WALL STREET JOURNAL for May 23.

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5-1-52

A DISQUISITION

BY

PRESCOTT KEYES

SUBJECT: HENRY D. THOREAU

CAMBRIDGE, MATTHEWS 25,
APRIL 14, 1879.

[Editor's Note: Prescott Keyes (1858-1943) was the son of Thoreau's friend and contemporary John Shepard Keyes. He graduated from Harvard, Class of 1879, cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa and became a Boston lawyer, a bank president, a district judge, the president of an insurance company, a trustee of the Concord Free Public Library, the Concord town moderator, a Concord selectman, and a member of the Social Circle. He was often rated "the town's number one citizen." In 1897 he wrote this "disquisition" at Harvard and in 1917, on the hundredth anniversary of Thoreau's birth he printed it as a Christmas card for distribution among his friends. Because it is rare and little known, we herewith reprint it.]

DEPRECATORY NOTE

THIS hundredth year since the birth of Thoreau led me to turn aside for a bit from the duties which seem to more than fill the hours of each day and to dig up the paper I wrote for my "Commencement Part" the year I graduated from Harvard.

Commencement parts were assigned in those days to students who attained 80% of the maximum mark for the whole college course. The parts were called, according to rank, orations, dissertations and disquisitions. A few were selected for delivery at Commencement. Mine was *not* so selected.

I hesitate to allow this "disquisition" to be even privately printed but a few of my friends have expressed so much interest in it that I have concluded to use it with amused diffidence as a Christmas greeting. Please remember that it was written nearly forty years ago when Thoreau had been dead but seventeen years.

P. K.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS,
DECEMBER, 1917.

DAVID HENRY THOREAU was born in Concord in 1817. His father was a lead-pencil maker and he himself worked at that trade until he was sent to Harvard at the age of seventeen. While in college he gained but little from his instructors or their text-books; he spent his time rummaging about in the dusty corners of the College library.

After graduating in 1837 he had to decide to what he should devote his life; which of the many paths that lay opening out before him he should choose. He turned aside from the accustomed paths and chose the by-path of a simple, sincere life, devoted to literature, to the study of Nature, to the development of what he felt to be highest and best in his own character—in short, to the art of living well. He refused to allow *his* life to be frittered away by detail, or its cares and labors to prevent his plucking its finer fruits. Most men are attracted to society; Thoreau to solitude, to Nature. Most men work in organized bodies; Thoreau did his life-work alone. Individuality is the key-note of his whole career.

He foresaw that he might be subjected to ridicule and that he would lose much in a worldly point of view, but believing in the great principle that a man should do that work in life for which he has an earnest enthusiasm, and feeling his own enthusiasm and deep love for Nature, he decided that his life ought to be spent with his mistress and not toiling and moiling in the busy world.

After teaching school for a year or two and making some more lead-pencils, he slowly drifted into the occupation of surveying the farms about Concord. This furnished him an honest, independent, though meagre support; it brought him into close contact with the farmers whose characters he studied with interest; "it led him continually into new and secluded grounds, and helped his studies of Nature", for while he surveyed the land for the farmer, he surveyed the landscape for himself.

His endless walks made up a great part of his life. Thoreau really understood the art of taking walks—of "sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields". He left the world with its cares far behind him and walked, a free man, through the realm of Nature. He made himself thoroughly familiar with every nook and corner of the country round

about his native village. He knew every animal and its habits, every plant from the mighty oak to the tiny moss that grows at its foot. The partridge had shown him her nest and the squirrel where the chestnuts and acorns lay hidden for the winter. He had seen the sun set and seen it rise again from the top of all the hills. He had rowed upon the river, by night and by day, from its source to its mouth, had bathed in its waters and slept on its banks.

To give a wider range to these rambles he went several times to Cape Cod, the Maine Woods and the White Mountains. But as even these excursions did not satisfy his longing to live close to Nature, he built himself a hut on the shore of Walden Pond in Concord. Here he lived for two years—years which he counted as better worth living than any others of his whole life. His sojourn at Walden was no affectation, nor was it a sour shutting himself out from his fellow-men. It was a deep draught from the fountain head of Nature's spring, giving him new life and placing him in a new relation to society. This "bachelor of thought and Nature", as Mr. Emerson calls him, went to Walden to try a simple experiment in plain living and high thinking, "to meet face to face the essential facts of life and learn of them what they had to teach."

But what did Thoreau do for the good of society in his life, free as it was from the narrowing and confining work of the world?

In estimating the life-work of such a man it must be remembered that more than all others it is the reformer who influences the permanent progress of a nation; that the destiny of a race is marked out by the leading minds of that race; that the great moving forces in this world's history have always been, and still are, truths perceived by individual men and pointed out by them to the multitudes. How much more noble is it to lead than to follow! and how much more lasting is the leader's work!

Thoreau told his countrymen in plain terms that they were running wild after the "almighty dollar", while neglecting their higher and truly essential nature; to use Mill's words, "that the life of the whole of one sex was devoted to dollar-hunting and of the other to breeding dollar-hunters". Thoreau taught them that true wealth lay in making their wants few—in reducing their denominator; that to live a true life—to get at the very meat of life—required but few of the so-called "means" of living: that the accident of poverty or riches was of but little moment. He once said:—"I am constantly reminded that if I had bestowed on me the wealth of Crœsus, my aims must be still the same and my means essentially the same".

Thoreau showed that mother Nature is after all the best of nurses as well for the soul as for the body, soothing, refreshing, and exhilarating; that "solitude in the presence of Nature is the proper cradle of all lofty thoughts and aspirations"; that Nature breathes into the character of man simplicity and sincerity; the false and the artificial quail in her awful presence. His own character was as pure as the crystal waters of his Walden. As an example of a just, sincere, stainless man, his name deserves the respect of coming generations. He hated sham with a bitter hatred and liked better to talk with children or the plain wood-chopper than with men-of-the-world.

> "For no trivial bridge of words,
> Or arch of boldest span,
> Can leap the moat that girds
> The sincere man."

Uncompromising in spirit, he could brook no make-shifts, could never give up the right or the just to the expedient. His scorn of pretense and hypocrisy shook to the foundation many a custom dear to society; his attack was not politic, but fierce and direct; he did not stop to count the cost but went straight to his end with a firmness of purpose not to be shaken. For instance, he never lost an opportunity to express his contempt for the Nation's halting policy in regard to slavery and the fugitive slave law. From the beginning he openly counseled resistance and himself helped many a slave toward Canada. Just after his friend, Captain John Brown, was taken prisoner at Harper's Ferry, when even the most reckless Abolitionists faltered and held back, Thoreau came bravely forward to speak the first words of public approval and eulogy of that hero whose name has been sung these twenty years in every Northern home. It was the first, as it was the strongest wave of the returning tide.

His books are the simple record of his life and thoughts, a sort of diary of his rambles; and yet they teach a morality as high and pure as the scriptures of any language—a morality that appeals to that element in man's nature which unites him with his Creator. They contain here and there touches of real poetry such as would do honor to Wordsworth, and many a beautiful and poetic thought crystallized into sentences equal to any in the language. Mr. Lowell says: "There is no writing that is comparable in degree with Thoreau's where it is best, where it runs limpid and smooth and broadening as it runs, a mirror for whatever is grand and lovely in both worlds."

Thoreau's was a life full of brave ideas and hopes inspired by Nature herself; but alas! a life cut short in its prime with its brightest promises still unfulfilled. Mr. Emerson says "The country knows not yet, or in least part, how great a son it has lost. It seems an injury that he should leave in the midst his broken task, which none else can finish. But he at least is content. His soul was made for the noblest society; he had in a short life exhausted the capabilities of this world: wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty he will find a home".

5-3-52

RECENT DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS (Cont.)

AU TRASK-TIMOTHY-EARLE.
IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY (0054) PH.D. 1982, 338 PAGES.
TI CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS: A STUDY OF THOREAU AT HIS WORD.
SO DAI V43(05), SECA, PP1549.

AB Recent criticism, following psychological studies of Thoreau's life, has called attention to moments of strain in Thoreau's writing in which, as Richard Bridgman has put it recently, "his feelings overran his defenses." While these attempts to make Thoreau's writing coincide with the biography are an improvement over the view of Thoreau as a successful spiritual quester, they err both in the assumption that Thoreau's writing was at moments out of his control and in the conclusion that Thoreau was confused or inconsistent in his uses of nature. The result is that the true force of Thoreau's work is avoided. Our preconceptions have prompted us to keep Thoreau safely housed at Walden Pond and have kept us from reading his post-Walden works carefully.

In fact, Thoreau wrote other literary works comparable to Walden in power. A Week is difficult, but nonetheless yields to careful analysis to reveal that Thoreau's preliminary exploration of nature subverts the Christian view of man by showing that we have, beneath civilized garb, a valuable core of savagery which is useful in moments of extremity and danger. Works like Cape Cod, "The Succession of Forest Trees," and "Wild Apples" deal with the prospects of a post-Christian culture facing a wilderness which is not a tabula rasa, but which has ideas of its own. The Maine Woods and "Walking" are Thoreau's fullest studies of wild nature, including the inner wilderness of the human body, and are Thoreau's masterworks. Walden, in this context, is a study of the border between the civil and the wild--it does not depict life in the woods.

Thoreau's best reform essays ("Civil Disobedience," "Slavery in Massachusetts," and "A Plea for Captain John Brown") are all consistent with the nature Thoreau envisions in the other works; they are that wilderness vision applied to society. Even the violence of the later reform essays, which is often thought to be inconsistent with Thoreau's so-called "nonviolent" work, is merely an extension and a culmination of his nature studies. Thoreau was not confused about nature; our view of him has just been inadequate to comprehend his entire startling vision.

5-1-52

We are indebted to the following for information sent in for use in this bulletin: D.Barto,W.Bly,J.Dawson,M.Detterline,R.Galvin,E.Gunnarsdottir,E.Hunsaker,E.Johnson, E.Jacobsen,K.Kasegawa,G.Kovar,U.Lyons,A. McGrath,J.Moldenhauer,M.Moss,R.O'Connor, M.Pitts,R.Redden,L.Rines,G.Ryan,E.Schofield, M.Sherwood,M.Sperber,J.Welch, and A.Zwinger. Please keep your secretary informed of items he has missed and new ones as they appear.

NOTES AND QUERIES . . .

The recent Robin Williams moving picture DEAD POETS SOCIETY quotes Thoreau frequently.

NECROLOGY: Wade Van Dore, in Clearwater, Fla., on April 18, at the age of 89. A poet, he often wrote of Thoreau. Gladys Clark of Concord, on April 11, at the age of 90. Her great uncle purchased the Walden cabin from Thoreau.

According to NEWSWEEK for May 29, recent non-violent student protestors in China spoke frequently of the impact of Thoreau on their philosophies.

The University of Lowell in Massachusetts has recently received on permanent loan the Thayer collection of manuscripts which includes a letter by Thoreau.

Dave Barto continues to make his Thoreau presentation at Walden Pond this summer. A videotape of the performance may be obtained from Living History Productions, P.O.Box 544, Levittown, Pa. 19058 for $40 plus $3 mailing costs.

Richard O'Connor informs us that the curious phrase in WALDEN about Cato and Brister "pulling wool" that has puzzled so many scholars simply means that they were hired to strip fur from animal hides.

We understand that the United States Rowing Association plans also to reenact Thoreau's 1839 trip on the Concord and Merrimack in August.

Herbert Cahoon, long the curator of manuscripts at the Morgan Library and in charge of the manuscripts of Thoreau's journals there, has recently retired.

Collector's Corner: Recent prices noted for first editions of Thoreau: CAPE COD (Watson edition), $125, $200; EXCURSIONS, $150, $550; LETTERS, $400; MAINE WOODS, $340; POEMS OF NATURE, $300; WALDEN, $850, $2000 (with 7 MS leaves); WEEK, $850, $700; YANKEE IN CANADA, $300, $285.

Thoreau's copy of Burt and Hubbard's REPORT ON THE GEOGRAPHY, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY OF THE SOUTH SHORE OF LAKE SUPERIOR (Detroit, 1846) recently sold for $1000.

Randy Weinstein (P O Box 29, Southfield, Mass. 01259) has for sale Horace Greeley's October 26, 1846 letter to Thoreau for $1950.

Jim Dawson of Trappe, Md., and Tim Clemmer of Richboro, Pa., have recently acquired Thoreau's personal three-volume set of THE POETICAL WORKS OF JOHN MILTON (Paris: Lefevre, 1822), with two of them inscribed "D H Thoreau Cambridge Mass" and the other "D H Thoreau Concord Mass."

According to the DETROIT NEWS for April 28, 1989, Rochester, N.Y. City Court Judge John Manning ordered eleven anti-abortion protestors who refused to perform community service for protesting at a hospital to read Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and write reports on it.

Jim Dawson of Trappe, Md., recently acquired a circa 1915 postcard view of Walden Pond, inscribed "Drove out Walden Road to Walden Pond and had a charming view from the hill side. Then, down thru the woods to the site where Thoreau's cabin, where he lived two years alone. Entertained many callers, studied nature. Used to come down by R.R. track, helping himself to garden truck from other's gardens as he passed by--no objections (?). Did not see heap of stones."

Josiah Gilbert Holland, poet, editor, and close friend of Emily Dickinson, once said of Thoreau, "Instead of . . . striving with a great band of Christian workers to lift the multitude out of vice and crime and misery, [he] refused to pay his poll-tax, and went out to see how little a man could live on, amusing himself meanwhile, by poking around a pond." [NEW YORK TIMES, Dec. 27, 1981.

7-1-52

Your secretary, Walter Harding, has informed the Board of Directors of our society of his desire to give up the secretaryship in July of 1991, thus bringing to a close exactly fifty years of work (and pleasure) in that office. The board will shortly begin search for a replacement.